"Euryanthe" Revived After A Long Silence

By Sylvester Rawling.

MR. GATTI-CASAZZA gave a sumptuous revival of Weber's "Euryanthe" at the Metropolitan Opera House on Saturday afternoon. The opera was dropped out of the repertory of the house more than a quarter of a century ago and it is a fair guess that few, if any, of the oldest subscribers hoped, or wished, to hear the work again. Rumor has it that Mr. Toscanini is responsible for the breathing into the nostrils of the dead work a new life. True, or false, it is he who bore the burden and carried off the honors of the production. The beautiful stage settings for the play, the notable singers in the cast, and the music that the composer has provided for them and for the orchestra would avail little but for him. Never were his talents more resplendent. At his entrance to the orchestra pit before the last act he was greeted with what usually is called an ovation and, strange to say, he acknowledged it with gracious bows and smiles.

Now comes the question, why this revival? The absurd libretto nobody defends, but the story upon which it is based is no less absurd. Doubtless the old French folk yarn, of which Boccacio in Italian and Shakespeare in English availed himself is the offspring of Arabian invention, when Jinns and Dinosaurs were understood to infest the earth and to fight with, or against, mortals. It has no grip upon the realistic imagination of to-day, and neither has the music with which Weber has adorned the tale. Talk about the modern musical veritists as you please, they have the virtue of sincerity and "Euryanthe" in the music of Weber, no less than in the libretto of Helmine von Chezy, is insincere and, to tell the truth, tiresome.

That Weber's opera holds passages of intrinsic beauty there can be no question. Notable are the pianissimo choruses in the Royal Castle in the first act; Euryanthe's delicious warblings in the castle gardens of Nevers; the duet between Eglantine and Lysiart before the tomb, with the rain falling in such a torrent that half the audience involuntarily looked to the ceiling to see if the deluge were coming through, and the one sincere aria of Euryanthe's sung before the spring in the last act. Frieda Hempel, in the title part, not, perhaps in her best voice, added a worthy impersonation to her gallery. Margarete Ober seemed to find occasional difficulties in the part of Eglantine, but made her way successfully with the character. Johannes Sembach won new favor for his Adolar, the hero, and Hermann Weil was effective as Lysiart, the villain. Mabel Garrison, as Bertha, made the most of a small part. Max Bloch was Rudolph. The chorus sang well and the ballet was graceful, thanks respectively to Giulia Setti and Pauline Verhoeven.

In the lobbies, between the acts, there was much talk among the pundits and the musically erudite about the historical significance of "Euryanthe," because it showed how much Wagner owed to Weber for the inspiration of his "Lohengrin" and his "Tannhauser." True enough! The Apostle of Bayreuth also stole much from his papa-in-law, Liszt. What of it? Every genius is a plagiarist, or he wouldn't be a genius. It is the man who absorbs what has been accomplished, puts it through the crucible of his own brain, and turns out a product that essentially is new that wins and deserves the world's acclaim. Not the veriest old fogy devotee of Weber can fail to admit that "Lohengrin" and "Tannhauser" are far superior to "Euryanthe."

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